

## [Pioneer Life and Customs]

W13914

[Beliefs Customs - Folkstuff?]

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Form [md]3 Folklore Collection (or Type)

Title Pioneer life and customs

Place of origin. Portland, Oreg. Date 12/30/38

Project worker Sara B Wrenn

Project editor

Remarks [CC?]

Form A

## Library of Congress

Circumstances of Interview

Federal Writers' Project

Works Progress Administration

OREGON FOLKLORE STUDIES

Name of worker Wrenn, Sara B. Date December 30, 1938

Address 505 Elks Bldg., Portland, Oregon

Subject Pioneer Life and Customs

Name and address of informant Cyrus B. Woodworth

Date and time of interview December 29, 1938 10:00 - 12:00 a. m.

Place of interview 501 Elks Bldg., Portland, Oregon

Name and address of person, if any, who put you in touch with informant —

Name and address of person, if any, accompanying you —

Description of room house, surroundings, etc. Small office room, unoccupied for the time, and used because quiet.

Form B

Personal History of Informant

Federal Writers' Project

Works Progress Administration

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### OREGON FOLKLORE STUDIES

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Information obtained should supply the following facts:

1. Ancestry
  2. Place, and date of birth
  3. Family
  4. Places lived in, with dates
  5. Education, with dates
  6. Occupations and accomplishments with dates
  7. Special skills and interests
  8. Community and religious activities
  9. Description of informant
  10. Other points gained in interview
1. English.

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2. Fifth and Burnside Sts., Portland, Oregon; Jan. 25, 1861. (Goodwin House).
3. Cyrus Woodsworth, father; Sarah Buckingham Woodworth, mother.
4. Portland, 1861-1885; 1885-1889, Salem, Oregon; 1889-1905, Dayton, Wash.; 1905-1939, Portland, Oregon.
5. Public schools, Portland; Willamette University (not graduate), Salem, Oregon.
6. Telegraphy, 1875-1876; Banking, 1876-1928. No accomplishments.
7. Interested in early Oregon history and the "Outdoors" in all its phases.
8. Mason for many years. Interested in all community activities. No present church affiliations. Baptized by Bishop Scott, first Episcopal Bishop in Oregon, in Trinity Episcopal Church, Second and Oak Sts., Portland, Ore.
9. A man of pleasing personality, of long experience in meeting the public. Well educated, somewhat travelled and of retentive memory.

Form C

Text of Interview (Unedited)

Federal Writers' Project

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Text:

I guess I know about as many people in Oregon as anybody: I've lived here long enough, heaven knows. We used to have some good times back in those days of the horse and buggy, as they call 'em now. That reminds me, I guess I engineered the first automobile race in the Northwest. It was up in Dayton, Washington — and that section was of the Old Oregon country, so I'll tell about it. There was to be a Fourth of July celebration, and it struck me a race between those new-fangled machines would attract a lot of attention. It did too. We had it on the town race-track, a half-mile track, and the automobiles were of the Olds manufacture, one of the first models, high and ornate, with brass trimmings. I don't remember anything about the cylinders. Maybe there weren't any. Anyway my wife and I got in one with the owner, who was to drive, and the owner of the other machine filled his up and off we went, while the excited spectators — and they came from all over the country — yelled, "Whip her up!... "Shove her along!"... "Take the whip to her!"... and anything they could think of to make us go faster. Such a thing as "Step on it!" or any other motor phraseology was then unknown. We responded as best we could, going faster and faster at what seemed a terrific rate, 2 until we completed the second lap. The passengers were scared half to death. It developed when we finished, almost as a tie, that we had achieved the unbelievable speed of 18 miles an hour! (if I remember, those machines cost \$1500.00). When, a few years later, Barney Olds drove his "Red Devil" Cadillac on the old Irvington race track here in Portland, the spectators gasped and shivered at his sixty miles an hour, which is no great shucks today. For that race of ours at Dayton, the women were all dolled up in yards and yards of veils. I think they had on long dusters too.

We used to have a lot of laughs in my early banking days. There was a camraderie at that time between officials and clerks, that don't seem to exist now. I was first in the bank at

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Ladd & Bush at Salem, and Salem sure was lively for some of us. I remember when the county court house was built. The architect was a young fellow named Boothby, I think he is still alive and living in Salem. He was pretty gay. When the goddess of justice that was to surmount the building was waiting to be hoisted to the top, some of the boys got hold of it one night, dressed it up in calico with a big rag baby in its arms, and pinned a notice on it to the effect that Boothby had been stepping out with the goddess of justice.

Salem about that time had two mythological characters that everybody knew about. I don't know what gave rise to them, just somebody's lively imagination, I guess, and the idea grew and spread until it was common property. Betsy Bolivar was the name of the evil genius, and Billy Patterson, the good. No matter what happened to anybody that was bad, Betsy Bolivar did it. Ask a little kid how its apron got dirty or its stockings got torn and ten to one the answer would be a whining "Betsy Bolivar did it, the mean old thing." In the same way any good fortune was attributed to Billy Patterson. He was much beloved. One day the word got out that 3 somebody had struck Billy Patterson and there was a great hue and cry as to who did it. Finally we were told the miscreant had been caught. Fourth of July came along shortly after. There was a big celebration, including a parade. Just ahead of the plug-ugly section — man and boys dressed in fantastic and outlandish disguises — come a dray, drawn by two black horses. On the dray was a big cage and in the cage was a dummy of a man, all loaded down with chains and balls. The band was playing a dirge. At Fifth and State streets there was a gallows, and there they took Billy Patterson's assailant out and hung him.

They took notice of things in Salem — a little touchy maybe. One of the society girls was getting married. She wasn't very popular and she asked just a certain few and the rest got even. The night of the wedding when the carriages and cabs of her guests were parked around the home some of her uninvited acquaintances took off wheels of the different vehicles and mixed them all up. They even tossed in a few dray wheels for good measure.

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They were months in getting that mess straightened out, and there sure was a lot of mad people.

Another time some of the good citizens took upon themselves to mete out punishment. A good-for-nothing scalawag had been living with and off a woman. He was warned several times to either mend his ways or clear out, to all of which he paid no attention. Then he was arrested and put in jail. One day a delegation, after — so it was reported — having intimated to the town marshal something of their plan with the suggestion that he be out of town, and receiving his reply, “Here's the key, so don't bust the door,” called quietly at the jail that night, and escorted the prisoner prisoner to a quiet spot out of town. They had managed to get a pot of tar, but they had no feathers, so they used sawdust. They covered him with tar and then rolled him in the sawdust. Later on in the night he got to the house of his lady friend and she appealed for help in ridding him of his messy 4 covering. They said it took her several days to get rid of the stuff and the kerosene used nearly burned his skin off.

After I came to Portland I was associated with the old bank of Ladd & Tilton, until it closed its doors in the 20's. In fact I was there for sometime afterward, helping to clean up odds-and ends. It was while so occupied I noticed a worn little book among a lot of discarded papers, and on investigating discovered it to be the original minutes of the meeting of the Presbyterian Mission on Clatsop Plains. I think the journal was turned over to the archives of the Presbyterian Church, here in Portland.

Portland wasn't so big in the 80's, nor so busy. The boys always had time to speak to the office boy and same that weren't office boys. There was a little wharf rat known as Johnny Mooney. He had only one leg and he lived down on the river bank. He was about twelve years old and he had a bank account. Usually he had a balance of a dollar and on this he would draw all the way from ten to 25 cents. Once when he was drawing out this last amount Mr. Ladd, seeing him, said: “Aren't you getting pretty extravagant, Johnny, taking out 25 cents.” “Yes, sir,” answered Johnny, “I guess I am, but a feller has to have same

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money Saturday night.” Johnny was always supplied with change, and how he got it was explained one day, when the crew of one of the warehouses along the river discovered he had a skiff that he propelled in under the floor, where he had bored a hole in which he had inserted a piece of plumber's pipe. This made it easy for Johnny to get a load of wheat, which he sold to the wholesale poultry houses. All was grist if not drift that came down the river to Johnny, and it didn't always have to come. There were saw logs from booms and it was even reported that Johnny acquired pig-iron from the smelter out Oswego way.

Talking about the Oswego smelter; during a freshet of the early 80's when everything from chicken coops to barns was floating down the Willamette, the word went around that all the pig iron from the Oswego mines was going down the river, but nobody got very busy about it.

I've always been interested in Oregon history, and, of course, I remember and knew a good many of Oregon's early history-makers. I remember Judge Thornton, the delegate who was sent to Washington in behalf of Oregon at the time Joe Meek went. Thornton was a little near-sighted. He always liked to get something for nothing. At the time the Kinneys of Salem tried out the new method of processing flour, which they called the patent method, Thornton brought suit against them on the basis that they couldn't use the word “patent.” He lost his suit, and the Kinneys, as a sort of satirical “thank you”, sent him ten barrels of the new patent process flour. Thornton kept the flour, too. His hands shook as he grew older, and he always signed his name with the aid of a writing machine, a sort of a steadying contraption. He would start out with big flourishing letters and end up with little teeny ones.

It's funny how places get their names. One day in the late 70's there was an excursion [of young?] people coming down the Willamette. The banks of the river at that time were practically virgin forest, with little groves here and there, and a stream coming in. The young folks got to picking out places for themselves. One of them would say, “I'm going to have that spot for my house”; another would shout “That's my future home over there!” and



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so on, till they came to an Island, when one of the girls jumped up and said, "That island's mine. I always did want an island." At that, a young man called out, "Well if you went that island, you'll have to take me along with it, for I already own that island." "I'll take you", the girl replied, and they shook hands on it then and there. Afterwards they were married. The island was what is known as Ross Island today. The young man was Sherry Ross, and the girl's name was Deardorff.

Form D

Extra Comment

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Comment:

Mr. Woodworth, whose knowledge of Oregon and Oregonians may be considered reliable and authentic, is full to the brim with pioneer stories of practically every nature. Since he does some writing on his own account, some of his information he doesn't care to impart. In this connection it might be well to retain the story of Ross Island for the archives only, as it is Mr. Woodworth's plan to send it for publication at an early date. He was enthusiastic

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over giving the information herein written, and promised to send the worker documentary material.

(Use as many additional sheets as necessary, each bearing the heading given above).